

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9, and 13 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Independent claims 10, 15 and 16 have been amended to incorporate the subject matter of dependent claim 13. Further, claim 14 has been amended to depend from claim 10.

Claims 13 and 14 were identified by the Examiner as being allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of base claim 10. The Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter.

Claims 10-12, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kondo et al. (U.S. 6,763,522). This rejection is believed clearly inapplicable to pending claims 10-12 and 14-16 for the following reasons.

As mentioned above, independent claim 10 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 13, which was identified by the Examiner as containing allowable subject matter.

In addition, independent claims 15 and 16 are method and program versions of independent claim 10 and have also been amended to include the subject matter of claim 13, which was identified by the Examiner as containing allowable subject matter.

Accordingly, in view of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter as discussed above, it is submitted that amended independent claims 10, 15 and 16 and claims 11, 12 and 14 that depend therefrom are allowable.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance and an early notification thereof is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone to resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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